

CASE STUDY

Supporting Fijian farmers and agrifood enterprises



“Farmers can see the difference in costs and incomes for growing different produce and investing in inputs such as fertilizer and irrigation.”

Simon Cole, Chairman, Fiji Crop and Livestock Council

Access to duty-free farm equipment, less costly fertilizers and temporary tariffs on bacon imports are some of the benefits achieved by the Fiji Crop and Livestock Council (FCLC) in 2013 with ITC assistance. FCLC is a TSI that aims to promote economic diversification by developing enterprises that complement sugar cane farming with other activities and diversifying production and exports. In 2012, ITC launched its strategic sector development project to support farmers and agrifood enterprises in diversification and developing new markets.

‘The success of our lobbying has far exceeded our expectations with policy changes that have come much sooner than expected,’ said Lavinia Kaumaitotoya, FCLC’s Chief Executive Officer. Food security and export growth are both achieved if farmers plant the right varieties and get higher volumes of good-quality crops to market. For the farmer, increased efficiency means increased income.

One of these policy reforms – introducing temporary tariffs on imported bacon – will enable Fijian businesses in the sector to restructure and improve their competitiveness.

The country has arable land and a tropical climate that is suitable for sugar cane cultivation. Other crops are also grown to supplement farmers’ incomes. These products are mainly sold at local markets, but to supply hotels, restaurants and supermarkets, and gear up for exports, they must comply with safety standards under the Fiji Food Act.

Local produce faces stiff competition from imports due to other factors such as inefficient farming practices and quality control. If improvements can be made in these areas, trade opportunities will open up for Fiji following the signing of new agreements in 2013 on inter-island trade protocols for food products in the Pacific region, and increased demand for fresh and processed food in East Asia and the west coast of the United States of America.

SUPPORTING FARMERS

To promote awareness of the procedures for the import of new agricultural species, the FCLC published in 2013 information on authorized seed varieties and approved suppliers. It also produced a brochure profiling 38 of Fiji’s agrifood enterprises to promote the country’s export supply capacity.

ITC and FCLC also created a *Farm Management Manual* and are training a team of financial management counsellors to assist farmers to improve their efficiency, advise on business planning and write business plans for grant and loan applications.



'Farmers can see the difference in costs and incomes for growing different produce and investing in inputs such as fertilizer and irrigation. They can also set themselves targets,' said FCLC Chairman Simon Cole.

ITC is training Ministry of Health inspectors in support of its launch of a series of workshops to improve sanitation at local markets. It is also assisting enterprises to establish food safety and hazard analysis and critical control points systems.

'Our farming business has changed with better documentation. We now have better day-to-day planning and better hygiene standards,' said Sashi Lata, manager of Nadi Bay Herbs.

EARLY WINS

In a pilot project, ITC established five clusters of farmers with marketing enterprises to develop business partnerships. It also linked a cluster of five ginger farmers in Burenitu village to a local marketing firm, Deans Marketing, to export their products to New Zealand.

Sima's Local Fruits and Vegies, based in the town of Nadi, is another success story. Following ITC assistance to meet food safety requirements and to obtain financing, the company is now supplying airlines through the Air Terminal Services at Nadi International Airport. Sima will also build a new pack-house to improve continuity and quality.

'I'm doing very well,' said owner Sima Deo. 'I'm supplying local products for catering on all flights that depart from Nadi.'

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Sashi Lata, Manager, Nadi Bay Herbs, Fiji

LEFT: A vendor at Fiji's Nadi market selling her produce; MIDDLE: Public and private sector participants, together with the FCLC, learning about ITC's Market Analysis Tools; RIGHT: Ginger, watermelon and other local crops for sale at a market near Lautoka, Fiji; BOTTOM: Trays of tomato seedlings in Fiji